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Political Parties and Corruption: 17 Hypotheses on the Interactions Between Parties and Corruption

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Political Parties and Corruption: 17 Hypotheses on the Interactions Between Parties and Corruption

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Political corruption, as a means by which money influences politics (Key 1936), is clearly determined by the characteristics of the principal actor in the political system: the party. Samuel Huntington, in particular, has linked the development of corruption to party weakness during phases of growing political participation. In this hypothesis, corruption spreads in those specific paths to modernization in which popular participation in political decision-making is not immediately accompanied by a strengthening of those institutions which should filter and direct collective demands: "the weaker and less accepted the political parties, the greater the likelihood of corruption" (Huntington 1968, 71). Apparently in contradiction with this hypothesis is the widespread belief that corruption is favored by the ubiquity and omnipotence of the parties, powerful and well-organized political machines capable of controlling civil society and the market. In Italy, *partitocrazia*, a concept derived from the political science literature, has been taken up in the press and in the political debate to stigmatize the ills of the "First Republic".

In what follows, I will present some hypotheses deriving from a research on the Italian case. A main advantage of the case study is the possibility to understand the linkages between political parties and corruption on the bases of a thick description. A main disadvantage is, however, that the case study does not allow to control for the generalizability of the hypotheses developed in a specific context. In this paper, I shall attempt to go beyond the Italian case, introducing illustrations from studies on corruption in other countries, among others the contribution to the conference on political parties and corruption, organized by the Robert Schuman Centre in March 1999, covering countries such as France, Belgium, Portugal, Spain, Great Britain, Japan, Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Venezuela.

I. How the Conditions of the Party System Influence the Spread of Corruption*

Research on corruption often looked for causal factors that could increase the propensity of individual and collective actors to offer or accept bribes. As far as the characteristics of parties and party systems are concerned, the analysis of the Italian case allows putting forward the following hypotheses.

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* Many ideas presented in this paper come from previous cooperation with Alberto Vannucci. Among others, see della Porta and Vannucci 1994, 199a and 1999b.

Hypothesis 1. Political Corruption is Favored by "Cartel" Parties, with Low Ideological Attachments and a Limited Role for Activists.

Although limited forms of corruption may develop also in ideological mass parties, corruption increases especially with forms of cartel parties, with fluid ideology and small grass-roots presence (on the definition of cartel party, Katz and Mair 1995). In Italy, when the scandals exploded in the nineties, the structure of the parties did not correspond to a model of *partitocrazia*. As Pizzorno noted:

> The term *partitocrazia* is not suitable for such a system. The very term "party" is a term of the open political discourse ... Certainly it is too indistinct a term for the language of analysis. There are not many acts easily imputable to a party as such. The term *partitocrazia* comes from a period in which the parties acted as collective subjects, guided by powerful leaderships responsible, if not to the membership as such, at least to elite circles composed of members. The leadership could answer for their members, parliamentary groups and mass associations before other actors within the political system, represented for their part by other parties. Decisions regarding the selection of political personnel were taken by the party leaderships according to largely pre-established rules (1993, 304-5).

In fact, recent research on political corruption indicated its widespread presence exactly where mass parties were not present. Low levels of militantism and rootedness in the society, a high degree of personalization, and pragmatism have been quoted to explain corruption in Spain. Legalized in 1977, the political parties of the Spanish republic remained always weak in organizational terms, with a very low 6% of party members on the total population. In fact, it has been observed that the Spanish parties developed from parties of notables in the beginning of the century to the contemporary parties of electors, skipping the phase of the mass parties. Spanish political parties "have tended to become increasingly oligarchic, with a growing divorce between leaders and members and little effort expended on membership recruitment" (Heywood 1998, 14). Notwithstanding the small number of members, the Spanish parties have however a large (and expansive) organizational structure, widespread on all the national territory, and which imply the need for many paid functionaries (Heywood 1997, 73-6). Lacking a grass-roots base of supporters, the political parties have to relay upon other sources: "The rate of public income in the treasury of Spanish political parties is probably the highest in Europe: 100 percent for the PSOE and 90 for the 'Partido Popular'. And ... the income from membership is particularly low: 1 per mil for the PSOE and 1,5% for the second" (Pujas 1996, 4). Similar conditions have been recalled to explain the development of corruption in the other Southern European countries that began in the mid-seventies their transition to democracy:

Portugal and Greece (Magone 1996, 16). In particular, for the Portuguese case, with the exception of the Communist parties, all the other parties have been defined as "parties of notables", with a weak organizational structure, often structured around personal clienteles both at the local and national level (Pinto de Sousa 1999).

Even in countries that had seen the development of mass parties, the spread of corruption came together with a decline in the ideological attachments by party voters as well as activists. For instance, in an analysis of political scandals in Austria, Pelinka observed that "the political parties have lost much of their original ideological character. One of the consequences of this 'secularization process' has been the increase of various pragmatic 'machinations' and the quest for nonideological 'deals' which not only have led to a deideologization of the parties but also to a concomitant proliferation and legitimation of individual careerism. Often linked to schemes of personal enrichment, the loss of ideology has upon occasion also led to an increase in the temptation toward criminal deeds" (1988, 169). The spread of corruption has been related to the organizational weakness of political parties in such different context as Latin America—for instance, the fragmentation in Columbia, with 628 electoral lists in the 1994 elections (Zuluaga Nieto 1996; Njaim, 1996)—or France (Ruggiero 1996).

Political corruption does not seems therefore to be a side effect of ideological mass parties; it grows instead with the transformation of the political parties into "cartel parties". In cartel parties, in fact, "Political entrepreneurs face serious financial problems. Not only are there no party members to voluntary help with their campaigns, there are no party members paying their dues either. The party has to buy in services, but has no income, or projected income, with which to do it" (Hopkins 1996, 15). Unable to mobilize a stable constituency, with no membership available for paying for the party expenses, and a political class who, lacking ideological motivations, sees enrichment as the only selective incentives to politics, these political parties would be more and more available to corrupt practices.

Hypothesis 2. Political Corruption is Favored by High Costs of Politics.

Political corruption increases with the cost of politics. In Italy, the high number of parties and elections and, especially, the development of clientelistic exchanges between voters and candidates are all elements that increased political cost, fuelling corruption. The decline of long-term loyalties to political subcultures and the mass-mediatization of electoral campaigns contributed to the escalation of political costs, fuelling the demands of bribes. New laws on public financing of

political parties were unable to solve the problems (della Porta and Vannucci 1999b). [1]

In line with the Italian case, also the Japanese example illustrates very well the way in which corruption interacts with the (enormous) costs of political activities. In Japan, where during the long staying in power of the Liberal Democratic Party (1955-1993) nine of the fifteen prime ministers have been implicated in political scandals, the costs of politics are so high that political corruption has been defined as a "redistribution system", in which political bosses collects bribes and, at least in part, distribute them to their followers in the form of services and donations of various kind (Bouissou 1997).

Comparative research indicated a strong, positive correlation between electoral campaign expenditures and corruption (Heidenheimer 1998). An increase in the costs of campaigning has been observed, in recent times, as a consequence of the presence of new media of communication: "The 'media revolution' has clearly exacerbated this problem by allowing previously prohibited private broadcasts and pushing up information, propaganda, and campaign costs. At the same time, the 'office revolution' caused by the spread of new technology (personal computers, photocopying and fax machines), required large investments to provide party headquarters and party owned newspaper with new equipment. Finally, ... salary expenditures reveal real increases in the major parties' official budgets" (Rhodes 1996, 10). In Italy, as well as Spain and France, the increasing role of the media in the electoral campaigns changed the role of party competition: "Greater use of the media helps create new rules of party competition, based on leadership-focused contests, which weakens the traditional character of parties and increase the costs of politics" (Pujas and Rhodes 1998a, 5). Researches on different countries converge in indicating that public financing does not, *per sé*, thwart corruption.

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[1] In Italy, the Law 195/74 was voted in 1974 after a big scandal related to illegal party financing in order to regulate the field by introducing public financing and rules for private financing (Rhodes 1996, 8-9). After the first law had been abrogated by referendum in April 1993, new laws substituted the subventions to parties with the remboursement of campaign spending to candidates (law 515/93) and regulated political financing through tax payments (law 2/1997). A strong relation between irregular campaign financing and political corruption was found also in Brazil (Fleisher 1997). *Viceversa*, the low costs of electoral campaigns in Great Britain have been quoted to explain low level of corruption in that country (Adonis 1997).

Hypothesis 3. Corruption is Favored by the Fragmentation of Political Parties and, therefore, Internal Competition Between Candidates of the Same Party.

Research on the Italian case indicated that corruption spread where political parties were internally fragmented in various factions. Especially before the reform of the electoral system, the possibility for the voters to choose the candidates inside the party lists (the so-called *voto di preferenza*) fuelled harsh (and expensive) battles between candidates belonging to the same party. Usually, the development of non-ideological, personalistic fractions, in an eternal war with each other.

Also in Japan, an electoral system with preference votes for the single candidates has brought about enormous expenses for the electoral campaigns, in particular those of conservative candidates who compete with each other in the same constituencies. If the candidates of the opposition usually relay upon the support of their party, conservative candidates instead have to conquer their votes one by one. The cost of an electoral campaign is in fact four time higher for a candidate of the government than for one of the opposition, because only the first has to face internal competition by other members of the party (Bouissou 1997). The clients are organized in *Koenkai*, or support organizations, with an average of ten- to thirty-thousands members for a MP of the conservative party: each of them is formed by a networks of small groups, built around particular social categories or recreational activities.[2] Because of internal competition, in order to avoid to "loose" his *Koenkai* in favor of a rival party-colleague, each candidate has to employ ten to fifteen secretaries, whose task is to organize specific groups, distributing gifts (in particular at marriage or funeral) or invitations to parties or journeys (Bouissou 1997, 136-8). During electoral campaigns, conservative aspirant MPs offer in fact concrete rewards to their supporters: "Apart from campaign literature, he or his staff will usually hand over a cash filled envelope ('for your trouble' - like posting his campaign poster at the wall of the residence) to his presumed supporters and voters during house calls in his district. Another must are regular organized all expenses paid trips to Tokyo or wining & dining at regional spas for members of the thousands strong local support organizations (Koen Kai), as well as any amount of charitable and individual donations" (Rothacher 1996, 3).

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[2] In Japan, in fact, "The incredibly high cost of political campaigning and the blatant illegality of many campaign practices discourages voters from working actively in elections, thereby impelling Japanese political candidates to develop their personal support association, known as *koenkai*, which are manned by political pros, while providing services to mass constituencies much in the manner of traditional American urban machine politics" (Macdougall 1988, 205).

Both in Italy and in Japan, the cost of electoral campaigns were therefore related with the degree of *competition between candidates belonging to the same party*. Also in Belgium, "the expansion of the occult financing of political parties in the 1970s and 1980s coincided with a drastic increase of party fragmentation and government volatility, not during a period of stable party monopoly or duopoly of executive power" (de Winter 1998, 12). As Jean Cartier-Bresson (1999) observed, the costs of corruption increases for parties with a decentralized structure, where each fraction forms its own network of corrupt exchange. In France, since the seventies, more and more decentralized forms of corruption spread the collection of bribes to the lower levels of the political and administrative hierarchy, with a shift from corruption as a means of party financing to corruption for personal enrichment.

Hypothesis 4. Corruption is Favored by the Development of Collusive Agreements Between the Different Parties.

Collusive interactions between parties, jeopardizing competition, reduce control on party involvement in corrupt exchanges. In Italy, the spread of corruption was facilitated by the long-term dominance of the Christian-Democratic party that governed Italy (although often in coalition with other small parties) for more than three decades. In this situation, both the governmental party and the opposition became, in a certain sense, "non-responsive" to the electorate (Sartori 1970). Moreover, the two largest parties, Christian Democracy and the Communist Party, fiercely fighting each other in the visible public spheres, bargained with each other in secret, creating the bases for the collusive agreements related with corruption.

As in Italy also in Japan, corruption seems to have been fuelled by one-party dominant systems. As Susan Pharr noticed for the Japanese system, "Long-term party rules makes systemic the distribution system by which supporters are rewarded at the expenses of non-supporters" (1998, 3). In fact, in Japan, one-party rule increased citizens' tolerance of corruption, with particularly "soft" attitudes between young and well-educated people (ibid.). To take another example, in Portugal, corruption flourished during the long-lasting occupation of power by the Social Democratic party (between 1985 and 1995) of Cavaco Silva, favoured by the lack of a "politically feasible" opposition (Pinto de Sousa 1999).

In the Belgian case, as in the Italian one, corruption was facilitated by another characteristic of the system that tends to reduce competition between parties: consociationalism (Frognier 1986). In fact, "the more occult dealings between élites, the greater the chances for corruption. Also, in a consociational democracy, political élites have more means to 'manage' the reality of corruption

and to minimize the harmful effects of the revelations of the scandals that involve them. They thus protect themselves 'chain of denunciation' which, from one particular scandal, may escalate and threaten to challenge in one way or another the political world as a whole. It is likely that a consociational democracy is more susceptible than other forms of government to develop this type of collective response, thanks to the 'cartelisation of elites', their capacity to control leaders within one's own pillar and to avoid conflicts that could result in chain of denunciations and ultimately political disaster" (de Winter 1998, 14-15). More in general, the "cartelization" of parties increases their tendency to collude, reducing competition for membership and pushing instead towards a large agreement on the use of public funds.

In general, therefore, political competition introduces controls on party activities, and these controls may jeopardize corruption. As Michael Johnston (1998, 13) observed,

> Significant and institutionalized political competition creates opportunities for political forces to win *or lose* power through publicly visible processes. A very wide range of issues can drive such competition, but where corruption is a serious problem it can be raised by opposition parties, and voters can remove those in government who have abused their power. Strongly competitive parties have an interest in protecting independent arenas of appeal against corruption, both in the judiciary and in investigative agencies. They can encourage, protect, and follow through on direct responses to corruption by citizens and civil society groups -- building resistance to corruption in civil society, in place of the kinds of evasive or illicit responses common where citizens are vulnerable to exploitation and have little political recourse.

Not all types of competition, however, jeopardize corruption. According to Johnston (1998, 15-16), "good competition"

> must be meaningful, but structured... The organizational strength of parties is important too: where parties are internally divided along factional lines or cross-cut by other loyalties (ranging from ethnic divisions to ideological fights to the influences of localism in societies such as the United States), or where electoral systems encourage intra-party contention, the decisiveness of competition between parties can be reduced. Splinter groups of losing parties may cut side-deals with the winners for support in a new parliament, while factions of the governing party may demand deals of their own. The leverage of both kinds of factions will be increased where electoral laws or political realities tend to deliver small majorities and less-than-decisive results. Maintaining or building party discipline may thus become a matter of distributing patronage, policy spoils, or outright bribes. Coalitions of parties too might lead to such corrupt deal cutting among leaders. Weak, divided parties will be less effective at bureaucratic oversight; indeed, factions or leaders within them may seek corrupt alliances with bureaucrats as a way to gain access to politically useful rewards. The possible scenarios and variations here are numerous. The point is that the notion of political competition as a limit on corrupt activity presupposes a particular kind of competition: orderly, fair competition among a

small-number of well-institutionalized parties with strong links to significant, lasting groups and interests in society. Where competition falls short of this ideal, it may not reduce corruption, but rather could even lead to more of it".

Political competition increases the risks of corruption only under specific conditions—such as media pluralism and independence of the judiciary. As Pujas and Rhodes (1998b, 12) noticed, in fact, "a strengthening of democratic checks and balances (with the emergence of a stronger and more independent judiciary and press) and greater political competition lie behind the proliferation of scandals in 1990s".

Hypothesis 5. Corruption is Favored by the Spread of Party Power over the Public Administration.

Party control over the public administration increase the resources that can be invested in the corrupt market, reducing at the same time the possibility of reciprocal controls between elected and career administrators. In Italy, an overreaching presence of the political parties has been often stigmatized. However, as Alessandro Pizzorno (1971) argued many years ago, the "strength" or "weakness" of parties can be differently evaluated depending on whether one considers the power of reinforcing delegation, procuring advantages for the representatives (the party apparatuses, in other words), or that of transmitting the demands of the represented.

The use of corrupt practices would seem to be negatively correlated with the second kind of party power, *reducing parties' ability to elaborate long-term programs, mobilize ideological resources, distribute participatory incentives and gain the support of an electorate of opinion.* As revealed in the Italian case, by concentrating on the organization of corruption the political parties privilege those decisions most productive in terms of bribes rather than those which might generate the greatest support among the electorate. In addition, corruption, by its very nature, leads to the dominance of hidden over visible politics, small-group logic over the search for wider participation. As in the case of the American political machine, "the party organization did not play an important role in developing alternative courses of municipal governmental action. Indeed, since machine politicians drew their resources from the routine operation of government, they did not concern themselves with policy formulation" (Wolfinger 1973, 104). In the long term, the evident squandering of resources connected to *maladministration* impedes corrupt politicians from attracting an electorate of opinion by presenting themselves as the bearers of prosperity and progress. The pragmatism of under-the-counter deals substitutes for ideological appeals.

Political corruption interacts instead with *the parties' power to reinforce delegation*. In Italy, with the alibi of the "political" nature of administrative decisions, the parties have invaded the managing boards of public bodies, using their power in ways not always directed to the collective welfare and not always lawful. More or less official mechanisms of political control over the nomination of certain public-sector bureaucrats have led to the *partitizzazione* of the public administration, producing feuds which the parties and their representatives have used for patronage and corruption (for instance, Vassallo 1994; Cotta and Isernia 1996). The influence of the parties in areas beyond the public administration -- from banks to newspapers -- has led to the an occupation of civil society, further lowering the defenses against corruption and mismanagement.

In a similar ways, in the new Southern European democracies, the emerging parties found in the occupation of the state apparatuses the resources they needed to build their organizations. For instance, in the Portuguese case, during the democratic transition and consolidation (in particular, between 1976 and 1982), parties became channels of individual upward mobility via the sharing of spoils (public sinecures, important position in the public administration, etc.) between the various parties. Within a system of "lottizzazione", the electoral weight determined the proportion of spoils that went to each party. Also later on, the parties used their easy access to public resources to attract clientele of voters (Pinto de Sousa 1999).

Also research on such different countries as Spain and Great Britain indicated—in line with research on the Italian case--the role of bureaucratic and institutional clientelism. In Spain, Heywood (1998, 11) observed, "the Socialist administrations of Felipe González (1982-1996) systematically used their control of the state machinery to reward party members and sympathizers by giving them jobs in the public administration". If this practice seems to have been less developed that in the Italian case, the PSOE "has been more concerned to establish links with business firms and entrepreneurs in order to secure party funding" (ibid., 11). Even in the UK, where "there is no real evidence of party loyalty being rewarded with jobs in the public administration (which is widely seen as being virtually free of corruption). None the less, the resources of the state can be used to promote party interests, as appears to have been happening on an increasing scale since the 1980s" (ibid., 12).

II. How Political Parties Help the Spreading of Corruption

The diffusion of corrupt exchanges is possible only thanks to the parties' assumption of certain particular functions. The research on the Italian case (in particular, della Porta and Vannucci 1999a, chapter 4) allows to develop the following hypotheses on the role played by political parties when political corruption becomes systemic. These hypotheses apply, in fact, not to occasional, petty corruption, but only to "systemic corruption", when "the illicit becomes the norm and (...) corruption is so common and institutionalized that those behaving illegally are rewarded and those continuing to accept the older norms penalized" (Caiden and Caiden 1977, p. 306).

Hypothesis 6. When Political Corruption Becomes Systemic, Political Parties Act as Guarantors of Illegal Business

The research on the Italian case indicated that political parties have occupied civil society not in order to realize long-term political programs but with the aim of facilitating the extraction of a parasitic rent. The "occupation of the public administration", in fact, allows the parties to secure continuity to the game of corruption through its diffusion in every geographical area, in the various public bodies and in the different sectors of the public administration: whoever respects the unlawful agreements can continue to do business with the public administration; anyone who opts out on a given occasion will be permanently excluded from the market for public works. Controlling the nominations to public bodies, the parties can generalize the *kickback*, transforming corruption into an established practice with accepted norms, at the same time guaranteeing the continuity of the system over time despite changes in the political personnel of the public administration. The parties assume, that is to say, the *function of guarantors of the illegal bargain*, participating in those operations demanding a "certification of trust: in other words, the promises of others, requiring to be guaranteed in some way, are used to obtain a benefit" (Pizzorno 1992, 31).

The political parties' role as guarantors means that it is no longer necessary to trust one's partner in corrupt exchange personally (although both partners must of course be convinced of the protector's ability to enforce the agreement). The accumulation of trust within the political party permits the sanctioning of other trades which--like those between citizens and representatives--are not legally enforceable, nor are self-enforcing: corrupt exchanges. As the currency issued by the State is guaranteed as official medium of exchange, so the *trust* in the fulfillment of promises or the collection of credits, which is offered by political organizations, permits the reduction of otherwise very high transaction costs. Authority within parties becomes then a resource for the strengthening of beliefs

or expectations that persons will honor their promises in the corruption market. The protection provided by the political parties appears important in settling the controversies that can emerge between the various actors in corrupt exchanges, both at the central and at the local level.

Hypothesis 7. When Political Corruption Becomes Systemic, the Political Parties Sanction Occult Transactions.

Parties are able to reward those who collaborate with, and to punish those who are not willing to play the corrupt game. Like all illegal transactions, the corrupt transaction is characterized by a particular deficit of trust: in fact, while in a legal transaction the law protects the contracting parties against possible transgressions, in illegal markets other actors must assume the role of guarantor. The political parties represent one of these actors whose function is to reduce the costs and risks of illegal business.

The party presence in the public administration offers the various participants in occult transactions the possibility of *distributing sanctions*, such as exclusion from the corrupt game: "On the territory there is a network of political machines aimed at making widespread, continuous and reciprocally protected corrupt exchanges" (Belligni 1995, 178). In the circumstances of illegality associated with occult transactions, the political parties can be likened to a credit agency managing trust between the various parties involved (Pizzorno 1992, 32-33). Given their widespread power of nominating the upper levels of public bodies, the parties can "sanction particular transactions thanks to their punitive power over political administrators and private individuals, guaranteeing the fulfillment of secret agreements and the overall functioning of the illegal market within distributive 'norms' created over time" (Vannucci 1993, 85; also Vannucci 1998). In fact, the accomplishment of these functions were rewarded with the allocation of a "supplementary" quota of the bribes to the parties, over and above that received by individual administrators involved in the decisions necessary for closing the secret deal.

Hypothesis 8. When Corruption Becomes Systemic, the Political Parties Play an Important Role in Socializing their Members to Illegality

Corruption transforms the party system into an institution of *socialization in illegality*. As criminologists have observed long ago, "criminal behavior is learned in interaction with other persons in a process of communication" (Sutherland and Cressey 1974, 75). In the case of political corruption in Italy, this communication process developed in particular inside the political parties involved in the corrupt exchanges. The corrupt parties provided socialization to

the rules of the (illegal) game, permitting the system of occult transaction to expand. Political parties spread in the political system values that justified corruption as the "normal" way of doing politics. White collar crime has been explained with reference to work-related subcultures[3]: "These work-related subcultures tend to isolate their members from the mainstream of social life and its construction of reality ... Because of this isolation, work-related subcultures are often able to maintain a definition of certain criminal activities as acceptable or even required behavior, when they are clearly condemned by society as a whole" (Coleman 1987, 422-23). In the case of corruption in Italy, political parties facilitate corruption by reducing the moral barrier against illegal actions:

> Political party membership, and the experience of political life in general, also has secondary socializing effects which become constitutive of a person's identity and therefore of their moral principles. Someone belonging to a political association can receive recognition for: technical or cultural abilities; loyalty, or conformism, in ideological commitment; loyalty to a particular leader; astuteness, aggressivity or lack of scruples in "taking out" adversaries; capacity for forming links with the wider society and bringing in money for party funds or other kinds of contribution; or, naturally, some combination of these qualities. The "moral quality" of associated life will vary according to the prevailing criteria for recognition. The more an individual's activity and relations are restricted to the concerns of party life the more the identifications on which identity is modeled will reflect its "moral quality", and on this will depend the moral cost of corruption. The more corruption is diffuse the more political parties themselves function as agencies for socialization in illegality, reducing the moral cost paid by their members for participation in corrupt practices (Pizzorno 1992, 47).

Politicians already "introduced" to the rules of the illegal marketplace introduce others in their turn. Loyalty to the party serves in obtaining appointments, which are then paid for in the distribution of the money acquired through corruption. The corrupt party "places" its men in various positions of responsibility in public bodies; in return it demands that they "conform" to the "rules", using those positions not only for personal enrichment, but also for (illegal) party financing. Through the parties' assumption of this role in socializing to corruption, the system of occult transactions expands. Susan Pharr's analysis of attitudes towards corruption in Japan indicates also a correlation between support for the governmental party and tolerance for corruption: "ethical laxness is in fact a significant predictor of supporting the LPD" (1998, 19). It is therefore

[3] Work related subculture are "epistemic communities that provide the locus for specialized reality construction in society on the basis of work concerns or ideological commitments" (Holzner 1972, 95).

also likely that parties involved in corruption tend to socialize also their voters to accept corruption and illegal practices.

9. *Hypothesis 9. When Political corruption Becomes Systemic, Political Parties Reduce the Risks Involved in Illegal Exchanges*

Protected by their common membership in the party system corrupt politicians can offer each other a series of reciprocal "services" which *reduce the risks* of participation in the market of corruption. Besides acting as "notaries" for occult transactions, keeping note of rules and exchanges, the parties become efficient agencies of commercial mediation, equipped with up-to-date databanks on the partners available for illegal operations. By exchanging confidential information corrupt politicians reduce the costs of identifying other parties on the illegal market. In Italy, the magistrates have reconstructed what amount to nothing less than "handovers" between particular administrators, whether of the same or of different parties. In particular, the successive presence of members of the same party in running an institution facilitated corrupt transactions, reducing the risks that would have resulted from a re-negotiation of the illegal agreements. Exchanges of information however were not limited to members of a single party. In the judicial documents, in fact, we also found ritualized "handovers" between politicians of different parties, with the "presentation" of entrepreneurs already involved in corruption to successors in office.

III. How Participation in Occult Transactions Transforms the Way in which the Parties Fulfill their Traditional Tasks

Political corruption acts on the three main functions of the political parties: the selection of personnel, the integration of the citizens, and the formation of public policies.

10 *Hypothesis 10. When Political Corruption Becomes Systemic, the Political Parties Select Business Politicians.*

As far as the *selection of political personnel* is concerned, in a functioning democracy politicians must be capable of elaborating general programs, convincing citizens of their benefits and putting them into practice. The rewards will be public: appreciation, power and prestige should count for more than material advantage. With the development of political corruption, however, the characteristics of the political class are transformed. The parties begin to select those individuals most proficient in the organization of illegal financing. In a public structure where information circulates concerning the gains from bribery

which can be made in certain positions it is to be expected that certain politicians will try to influence the internal decision-making process in order to occupy these positions, investing both their own resources and, where possible, those of their organization. In other words, the institutional mechanisms for selecting political and bureaucratic personnel are altered in favor of individuals with fewer scruples and who are willing to "invest" in creating influence. In this way political corruption leads to the proliferation of actors who do not properly belong either to the state or to the market and therefore "violate" the rules of functioning of both. In the research on the Italian case, this type of actors were defined as "business politicians" (see della Porta and Vannucci 1999a, chapter 3). As Pizzorno has noted, "the sense of party membership is altered. One no longer joins to contribute voluntarily to the work of government, but in order to be admitted to the competition for positions of private interest ... The various filtering processes, then, will be designed to ascertain whether the future business politician is a person willing to participate in illicit practices or who, at the least, will behave 'responsibly' and pose no moral objections should he become aware of them" (Pizzorno 1992, 27).

Not only in "vicious" Italy, business politicians substitute for the ideological politicians of the past. Even in the "virtuous" Great Britain, "Whilst the Conservative Party has a long history of 'business politicians' (in the sense of MPs with direct involvement in, or close association with, the business and financial worlds), similar accusations have recently been leveled at the Blair administration" (Heywood 1998, 14).

Hypothesis 11. When Political Corruption Becomes Systemic, the Political Parties Develop Clientelistic Relationships with the Electors.

A second function of political parties is the legitimization of the political system through the *integration of citizens*. In a democracy, the parties are the principal actors in the structuration of the vote, creating electoral identifications that are frequently maintained over generations. The structuring of the vote takes place by the definition of programs that are then proposed to the electorate. The search for the highest number of votes should lead the various parties to represent the opinions and interests of particular groups of citizens.

Research on the Italian case indicated, however, that the diffusion of corruption transform the structure of electoral preferences: rather than the vote of identification or opinion, the cliental use of the vote as an object of exchange prevails -- vote in exchange for favor. Political corruption produces, in fact, a value system oriented to the fulfillment of individual objectives through interactions based on extrinsic or instrumental benefits at the same time as it

discourages "ideological" types of relations based on intrinsic or expressive benefits. The use of corrupt practices has reduced the capacity of the parties to mobilize ideological resources and distribute participatory incentives. We can say, therefore, that political corruption, by encouraging the diffusion of a structure of preferences oriented to individual mobilization, erodes the effective capacity of the parties to integrate, select and mediate citizens' interests.

While political analyses, including those on the Italian case[4], have normally underlined the negative consequences of the excessive use of ideological incentives by political parties, the recent scandals signal the risks attached to the opposite condition: the excessive availability of material incentives.[5]

12. *Hypothesis 12. When Political Corruption Becomes Systemic, the Political Parties Select Demands that are Supposed to Bring More Bribes.*

A third function of political parties in a democracy is *the formation of public policy*: in a functioning democracy the parties have the job of defining the direction of public policy and controlling its implementation. The definition of public demand is a pivotal moment in the democratic political process since it is here that the administrative system is confronted with the needs and demands of social groups. Political mediation is the filter through which interests are articulated and aggregated, and its task, as Pizzorno has pointed out, is "to identify and interpret the needs and desires of the population; select and generalize those which can be expressed in political terms; propose, justify and criticize policies and measures to achieve these ends or, when necessary, to explain why they cannot be satisfied" (Pizzorno 1992, 22).

Corruption radically alters this function, privileging the satisfaction of so-called "internal demand" (Chevallier and Loschak 1983, 113). Concentrating on the organization of corruption the parties have privileged those decisions most "productive" in terms of bribes; the tendency is to spend most in those sectors where controls are weakest.

Research on Italy indicates a fragmentation of public demand in order to satisfy particular interests while, at the same time, no wider vision of the

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[4] Italy has long been considered the paradigmatic case of polarised pluralism, characterised by a plurality of political parties, the existence of anti-system parties, a division into two hostile ideological camps and a dynamic of centrifugal competition (Sartori 1970).

[5] . *Viceversa*, in Chile the presence of strong ideological cleavages may explain why "Chile stands out as a country in which corruption is not perceived as widespread as in the rest of Latin America" (Colazingari 1998, 6).

problems develops among the various public officials involved. In fact, when political corruption is systemic, the parties' discretional management of public spending often becomes an objective *in itself.* The aim of administrators is to attract as large a quantity of resources as possible to the areas where they have power in order to pocket a fee for mediation in the form of a bribe and/or gain support as a result of the effects of public investment on employment (treated as a sphere for clientelistic exchange). Public spending is therefore diverted to those sectors where gains from corruption are greatest and in which the discretional nature of the procedures reduces the risks involved. In general, little attention is paid to whether these works or services serve the needs of the collectivity. It is not even necessary that they are completed or brought into use, as demonstrated by the countless projects never finished or never actually used. Predictably, the priority given to obtaining funding brings about scarce regard for the quality of the projects that are at the basis of public demand. Public demand may remain unsatisfied in this context if the politicians involved do not find the amount offered by way of bribes sufficient.

IV. How Corruption Affects the Party System

Political corruption affects not only the individual parties, but also the characteristics of the party system, in particular of the competition between parties.

Hypothesis 13. Political Corruption Favors the Development of Connivance in the Party System

The distribution of public power frequently means that it is impossible for a single agent to offer the service demanded by a corrupter. When corruption is practiced by a number of politicians in collaboration, centralized power management and a consensual division of the proceeds become necessary; power-sharing brings the risk of contention, reciprocal denunciations and judicial investigation if disagreements arise (Harendra 1989, 507). As long as those involved are all subject to a single Centre of power (a party secretariat to which all owe their election or nomination, for example) disagreements can be recomposed at that level. However, many decisions involve individuals from different parties, party currents or factions, who are not therefore subject to a single authority having the power to smooth over subterranean antagonisms and conflict. In such cases open conflict may well lead to disastrous consequences for all. In order to avoid these risks, hidden agreements are made between parties.

Research on corruption in Italy indicates that such agreements were sometimes based on a fixed distribution of public contracts among firms based on the color of their political protection (or to consortia whose composition reflects the relative weight of the various power centers) or on distributing payoffs according to the electoral strength of the parties involved. In other cases, the agreement took place in an earlier phase and regarded the powers employed in attracting bribes rather than the proceeds. For example, the management board of the national electricity body, the ENEL, was composed of eight directors appointed by the political parties. According to one of them, "each director was responsible for procuring his own party money. A tacit understanding was reached: each looked after their own back yard and stayed out of the others' business" (*Panorama* 14/2/1993, 46). The apportioning of offices among the various political parties therefore gave each political actor control over certain, defined areas of public activity, areas which were negotiated or arranged at a higher level.

In the Italian party system, the concentration of single parties on gathering illegal income has favoured the search for reciprocal connivance. On at least one point a secret, non-belligerence treaty accompanied the fierce clandestine battles over the division of these funds: the non-denunciation of the system of corruption. While in the *visible* political arena the political groups tried to gain votes by distinguishing between themselves through open (more or less ideological) competition (Pizzorno 1993), in the *secret* political arena (including the market for corruption) there was a strong tendency towards inter-party collusion.

Not only in Italy a collusion between governmental and opposition parties seems to be common practice as far as corruption is concerned. Another, extreme case is Japan, where the silence of the opposition seems to have been bought through relevant sums of money paid from the conservatives to their adversaries--sometimes behind the screen of a fake *mah-jong* game between politicians of the government and the opposition (Bouissou 1997, 140-2). In general, cartel parties, characterized already by collusion with a massive use of public financing, manifest they reciprocal solidarity when scandals related to party financing emerge.[6] In the French context Becquart-Leclercq (1989, 205) observes within the network of corruption a shared adherence to operational modes of implicit codes which include "the conspiracy of silence: it operates particularly between leaders of various political parties, despite their sometimes bitter and violent conflicts; to survive, all must respect the rules of the game and maintain silence

[6] For example, see Frognier (1986) on Belgium; Roth (1989) and Seibel (1997) on Germany; Jiménez Sanchez (1995, 1996a and 1996b) on Spain.

about the rules themselves". In Germany, resilience to scandals was connected to the organizational oligopoly on which parties could build. The stability of this system rests, above all, on a strong interparty consensus about the basic rules of the game (including the legal/illegal ways of party financing), and on the commonly shared interest of the 'established' parties to retain their *de facto* monopoly of public decision-making and to guard it against outside forces. This common interest has in large part suspended the functioning of the checks and balances and the institutional mechanisms of control usually associated, at least in theory, to competitive party systems, replacing them with conventional patterns of tacit agreement and mutual privilege enhancement (Blankenburg, Staudhammer, Steinert 1989, 922).

Hypothesis 14. When Corruption is Systemic, Other Invisible Actors May Substitute the Political Parties as Guarantors of the Illegal Exchanges

If corruption has transformed the foundations of power within the parties and their functions, it can be added that the influence of the parties in the operation of networks of corruption varies considerably from one geographical area to another. In the Italian situation, in particular in the South, organized crime intervened to provide the resources of violence (or "private policing") the widespread system of illegal exchanges needed in order to impose compliance to the rules of the game. Mafia, *'ndrangeta* and *camorra* surrogated for the organizational weakness of political parties and, at the same time, contributed to increase that weakness. As the ex-mayor of Reggio Calabria observed:

> The difference between *kickbacks* in the North and South is that [in the North] there is a centralized structure. A net controlled and run in a unitary fashion. The party collects the money and then divides it among the factions, after retaining what is required for the party itself. Here [in the South], on the other hand, it is exactly the reverse. If whoever collects is the head of the party at that moment, that's where the money finishes up. But it's a subterfuge. In reality, the party means one's own faction or corresponds to immediate group interests. It is not a small difference. The mechanism provokes tensions and dramatizes the whole of political life. Worse than that, everything else--alliances, decisions--is subordinated to bribery and money (Licandro and Varano 1993, 122-23).

In certain regions of Southern Italy in particular, organized crime partly substituted for the political parties in the function of certifying trust between those involved in occult exchange and consequently receives a part of the bribes. Although not to the same extent, also in the Belgian case, criminal organizations grew in the nineties, and tried to develop linkages with police, judges and politicians. As Lieven de Winter (1998, 16) remarked, "although organized crime is a relative newcomer, also on the corruption market, given the occult character

of public market attributions, this new actor has found a fertile ground and can easily overtake the profits from 'rotten markets'".

In general, therefore, we can state that, if in system of systemic corruption parties function as guarantors of illegal exchanges, they are however not alone in doing so. Alongside them, in fact, are ranged a series of aggregations -- some of them formal, others not -- all of which have in common a low level of visibility: "deviated" freemasonry lodges, organized crime etc.. Political corruption, being based on occult transactions, subtracts in fact power from visible sites. The arenas of decision-making therefore tend to shift from visible to hidden politics, where the parties are not necessarily the dominant actors. Weakened by the spread of corruption, the parties become supporting actors, behind the scenes of the crypto-government in which the real decisions concerning the public sphere were taken.

15.

V. How Political Corruption Transforms the Party Structure

Political corruption also produces the development of "hidden" structures in the political parties.

Hypothesis 15. When Political Corruption Becomes Systemic, Positions Connected with Clandestine Financial Transactions Acquire Greater and Greater Importance.

Systemic corruption leads to an ever-diminishing prestige of visible as opposed to invisible political positions, increasing the power of those who manage the collection and distribution of bribes. In Italy, secret structures were constituted within the parties, devoted to the gathering and administration of illegal funding. A fundamental role in organizing the business of corruption was in fact played by those whom, in the course of recent scandals, the press referred to as "*party cashiers*". While occasionally to be found as administrative secretaries of parties, more frequently they occupy "informal" positions, recognized only within the invisible organizational structures which exist inside the parties. Their careers are founded on the party's confidence in their ability to bring in contributions, legally or otherwise, and to manage them in an "honest" and "reliable" manner. Such individuals were described in the following terms to the Milanese magistrates:

Each party has referents responsible for controlling the allocation of contracts, maintaining the contacts with the different companies and collecting bribes, or having them collected. They also try to place trusted politicians on the boards of the various bodies, who then negotiate directly with businessmen ...

[thus] veiling what are really prearranged deals on bribery with formally legal agreements and legitimation (*Panorama*, 12/7/1992, 27).

The cashier's function, in fact, is to organize both the legal and illegal financing of his party. In doing so he must mediate between and coordinate a plurality of networks composed of different kinds of actor. The cashiers of the various parties had the task of co-ordinating the collection among themselves, reducing the amount of energy any one party needs to invest in occult exchange. The "municipal cashiers" in particular operated with each other in a coordinated way, taking it in turn to demand and collect bribes for all the parties and thereafter redistributing them according to precise (but unwritten) rules (della Porta 1992). Within the transversal structures that existed for the collection and distribution of illegal funds, the various party representatives even alternated in fulfilling the functions of cashier and redistributor. In complete consociational agreement, the "cashiers" of one party would occasionally carry out their activities in the headquarters of another or would meet together in order to redistribute the proceeds of bribery. Thus the figure of the "collective cashier" emerged. The "national cashiers" also met in order "to work out in agreement between themselves the best strategies for obtaining contributions from enterprises, even where this is in violation of the law on political financing" (Chamber of Deputies 1993, 10).

Besides coordinating the activities of the various actors involved in corruption, the cashier system also limits the amount of compromising information in circulation. It is the cashiers, in fact, who maintain relations with those who gravitate in the orbit of the political parties in search of favors, in particular entrepreneurs operating in the public sector. Although in no way official, the position they hold is well known to businessmen, and it is to the cashiers that they turn for resolving technical or bureaucratic difficulties regarding public contracts.

Naturally, this "confidentiality" concerning the origin and distribution of bribery money heightens the power of the cashiers, frequently the only ones who possess a detailed knowledge of the mechanisms and regulations governing its allocation. For this reason, party cashiers, in order to acquire a favorable "reputation" in the market of corruption, must adhere to a particular conception of *honesty*: respect of the obligations assumed in illegal transactions, obligations not

subject to legal ratification, naturally, and whose violation cannot be legally punished.[7]

Hypothesis 16. When Political Corruption Becomes Systemic, Invisible, Unofficial Structures Tend to Emerge in the Parties

The various actors involved in corrupt exchanges are connected, often across party lines, in an *invisible organizational structure*. As a result of the spread of political corruption the personal secretariats of individual bosses acquired a growing importance. According to the research on the Italian case, a fundamental step in the career of any business politician was the creation of a private "headquarters", a personal secretariat, often disguised as a research Centre or some form of enterprise. The function of these restricted spaces in the life of parties permeated by corruption is explained by the Milanese ex-administrator Mario Chiesa:

> I had my private office as well. In the city-Centre, in via Castelfidardo. A long way from Quarto Oggiaro. Two rooms on the ground floor of Number 11. A table for meetings, a telephone, an office for the secretary. The transformation of the PSI from a party of militants to a party of clients made finding via Castelfidardo necessary. The section, even when normalized and run by loyal comrades, wasn't a suitable place for a certain kind of politics. For example, I couldn't call restricted meetings in the section. If a member of the rank and file, passing and seeing the lights on, was tempted to come in, I would have had to change subject. If he didn't and felt emarginated because he hadn't been asked to attend, then he would have been less friendly at the opportune moment. *A visual control on your activity has heavy costs* (in Andreoli 1993, 29, emphasis added).

As emerges clearly from this testimony, the reasons for creating personal secretariats lie precisely in that (even minimum of) control which the visible structures of the party imply. If the organization of the system of corruption required more discrete sites, the sections were not, however, shut down: on the contrary, they often grew in size. But they changed functions, becoming the sites for assembling "paper members" ["*falsi tesserati*"], "ready for making up the numbers at meetings and demonstrations and disciplined participation at section, ward or municipal congresses" (Mario Chiesa, in Andreoli 1993, 35). Clubs and (fake) research institute mushroomed around party bosses, responding to their need to escape any internal democratic control, and create flexible and less visible structures (della Porta 1992, 202).

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[7] Similar to party cashiers, in their role and resources, are the personal secretaries of politicians, the so called "*portaborse*".

Hypothesis 17. When Political Corruption Becomes Systemic, the Growth of an Invisible Party Structure Produces Centrifugal Tendencies in the Parties

As happens in illegal systems, the degree of vertical centralization that corrupt networks are able to attain seems to be relatively low. The evidence of Italian politicians involved in judicial investigations offers a picture of the system of corruption as a multicephalous collection of networks gathered around individual bosses, with only a few points of coordination from above. The parties were fragmented into numerous groups based on blind, if temporary, obedience to a boss. The power of each boss rested on a nucleus of faithful followers, with a clan-like solidarity. This led to a monetarization and parcellization of power, the decline of internal loyalty, and the transformation of the party into a series of networks in a permanent state of internecine war. According to one of the judges who led the "mani pulite" investigation, Piercamillo Davigo, "A lot of the illicit founds were used by the politicians of the different fractions to buy party membership cards. ... These membership cards were used to established power relations inside the parties ... The parties were transformed into joint-stock companies, where bribes were used to buy shares in order to acquire the possibility to be re-elected" (Davigo 1993, 11).

VI. Concluding Remarks

The aim of this paper was to put forward some hypotheses on the development of corruption and its interaction with political parties and party systems. In particular, I discussed hypotheses emerging from research on the Italian case, confronting them with evidences from other countries. Although by no way systematic, the comparison with other cases helped to specify some hypotheses. As it is often the case with comparative politics, one of the most important result of the first attempt to go beyond the single case study is the emergence of a need for a more refined definition of the concept of corruption, and the development of typologies for the different forms of the phenomena. This is a main task for future comparative research on corruption.

A second conclusive remark is in order. The research on the Italian case indicated the insufficiency of causal explanations, in particular for long-lasting and complex phenomena such as corruption. Also this attempt to generalize beyond the Italian case support the view that we cannot understand systemic corruption without the combined analysis not only of preconditions for corruption, but also of the action of the corrupt institutions to reproduce the preconditions for their own development. The comparative analysis seems to confirm the some characteristics of the political parties and party systems—such

as cost of politics, cartel parties, organizational fragmentation, occupation of the public administration, week competition between government and opposition, etc.--seems to favor corruption. We have to add, however that, at its turn. corruption transforms parties and party systems: it increases the cost of politics, reduces the capacity of political parties to form collective identities, introduces centrifugal tendencies inside the party, strengthens the party grasp on the public administrations, spreading clientelistic relationships, attracting business politicians, enforces the power of the hidden party structures. Moreover, when political corruption is systemic, political parties act as guarantors of the illegal exchanges, socialize their members to illegality, sanction illegal transactions, reduce the risks involved in corrupt exchanges. More information on the "internal dynamics" of corruption are needed in order to specify the hypotheses developed from the rich materials available on the Italian case.

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